

WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, over the next few weeks, Senators will work to conclude the business of the 114th Congress as we begin looking forward to the 115th. We have a lot to do, including approving several conference reports and funding the government. It is good to see the respective committees making important progress on conference reports for the National Defense Authorization Act and the Water Resources Development Act.

We will work with our counterparts in the House to consider each of those in the coming days and to send final bills to the President's desk for signature. We will also take up the 21st-century cures bill, which contains resources to promote medical research, including advancing regenerative medicine, among many other important provisions. Sometime soon we will also take up the Iran Sanctions Extension Act, which provides underlying authorities necessary to reimpose sanctions if those sanctions are called for on the country that has continued to exhibit disturbing and very aggressive behavior. And of course we will work to pass the continuing resolution to fund the government.

I would also like to note that my friend from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI, is continuing her efforts to advance the Energy Policy Modernization Act, which passed the Senate with large bipartisan support earlier this year. As the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, she has been a champion of this critical bill and has never stopped working to move it forward. I appreciate her work in that capacity, as well as the many other Members who have been leaders on each of the issues I just named.

I would encourage colleagues on both sides to continue working together so that we can complete our work very soon.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, during the Presidential campaign, which just concluded, President-Elect Donald Trump made some inflammatory remarks about immigration and immigrants. I condemned those remarks, as did many in both political parties, and I remain concerned about the impact that rhetoric has on America and the people who are living in the United States.

On election night, Mr. Trump said, "Now it is time for America to bind the

wounds of division." As one step in bringing our Nation together, Mr. Trump should change his thinking on at least one aspect of immigration, and I hope even more. As the President-elect knows, we are, in fact, a nation of immigrants, and immigration makes America stronger.

Like me, Mr. Trump is the son of an immigrant. His wife will be only the second immigrant in American history to serve as First Lady. During a recent interview, Mr. Trump acknowledged that millions of undocumented immigrants are "terrific people." That is a good start; words matter. The tone the President-elect sets with the language he uses can help to bind the divisions in America, but actions matter as well. I hope that one of President-Elect Trump's first actions will be to pledge to continue the program known as DACA.

It was 6 years ago that I sent a letter to President Barack Obama, and joining me in that letter was Senator Dick Lugar, a Republican Senator from Indiana. It was a bipartisan letter, and we asked President Obama to stop the deportations of young immigrants who grew up in this country. These young people have come to be known as DREAMers. They were brought to the United States as children. They grew up singing the national anthem in their classrooms and pledging allegiance to the only flag they ever knew—the American flag.

These DREAMers are casualties of our broken immigration system. They were brought here as children, toddlers, infants, babies. They didn't have any voice in the decision of their family to come to America. They were brought here to live. We invested in them. We put them in our school systems. It really makes no sense, since many of them have become accomplished and promising young people, to give up on them now and deport them back to countries they have never known.

The President of the United States, Barack Obama, responded. He established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which is known as DACA. DACA provides temporary renewable legal status to immigrant students who arrived in the United States as children. What does it take? A student has to fill out an application form.

When this Executive action went into effect, I joined with Congressman LUIS GUTIÉRREZ of Chicago. We decided on the first day of eligibility we would set up some tables at the Navy Pier in Chicago, and we would welcome young people to come in and sign up. These were undocumented young people who had grown up in the United States, and now they had a chance because of the President's Executive action to ask for temporary protected status and a work permit.

It cost money, almost \$500. When they submitted their names, they also submitted their names for a criminal

background check to make certain they had no serious criminal offense and they were no threat to this country. Congressman GUTIÉRREZ and I expected several hundred to show up. We had immigration lawyers ready to volunteer to help them fill out the forms.

We were stunned. The night before, at midnight, they started lining up in the dark with their parents, and they waited all night to come into that room and to sign those applications so that they, as undocumented young people in America, would have a fighting chance to become part of America's future. That is all they asked for. They didn't ask for jobs. They didn't ask for government programs. They don't qualify for very many, if any. All they asked for was a chance—a chance to live here and not be deported and a chance to work here.

So far, in the few years that DACA has been in effect, over 740,000 young people have signed up. They came forward, paid their fees, and went through the background checks. They were approved. Now they are working or going to school.

DACA has allowed these DREAMers to make contributions to America that are valuable to all of us. They are soldiers, nurses, teachers, engineers, police officers, and they are aspiring to the highest levels of education in our country. These DACA recipients are making important contributions to our economy.

A new study by the Center for American Progress finds that ending DACA would cost the United States \$433.4 billion in gross domestic product over the next 10 years. These are not just bright young students; they are great workers. They will be great professionals. They will help people, and they will make America stronger.

DACA is based on the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is bipartisan legislation that I first introduced 15 years ago. If you are going to serve in the Senate, you have to be patient. I didn't dream I would be standing here 15 years later, still asking for the Senate to approve the DREAM Act. In the meantime, what President Obama did was to say we will protect these young people while Congress debates the future of immigration reform, but we will make sure that they can stay in this country without fear of deportation.

If the DREAM Act is enacted into law—and, incidentally, it passed the Senate several years ago—it will give these undocumented students a chance to earn their way to legal status and citizenship. DACA is clearly legal. Like every President before him, President Obama has the authority to set immigration policy for his administration. DACA is also smart and realistic. It is a way to enforce our immigration laws the right way, to make sure that these young people who have done nothing wrong, who have no criminal problems, who have paid their fee and registered with the government are allowed to